



# DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

EPISCOPAL CHURCH CENTER • 815 SECOND AVENUE • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017

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February 5, 1981

## MONKS' CORNER

(Monks' Corner is an occasional spiritual column prepared exclusively for the diocesan publications by members of the Order of Holy Cross.)

## MEETING MY NEEDS

By Nicholas Radelmiller, OHC

I have a problem. I love to buy things. Whenever I am a little bored, on vacation, in sight of a department store, or depressed I want to buy things. Almost anything. I see a little advertising, and I willingly suspend disbelief. If I had any money I would be in serious trouble.

Many people, like me are willingly tricked into believing all the claims of advertising. We want to believe that if we buy things we will have the good life. Our spouses will be elegant and accomplished. The children will be rosy-cheeked and slightly smudged. We will be as fulfilled, handsome, and thin as all the pictures suggest.

The harsh truth is that no one is ever that handsome, that accomplished, or that fulfilled. Human life is not like that. It's sheer fantasy. All the lures of advertising, desire for things, and willing belief can't change the truth.

But we want to believe because we think we are too young or too old, too fat, too ordinary or too wrinkled, and so we are dissatisfied. And, deep down we are afraid. So, on some level we agree to the notion that things can satisfy us and protect us from fear. But my new clothes are old tomorrow, and my new toys have lost their charm, and I've gained five pounds, and I need to be assured all over again.

The roots of dissatisfaction are that I cannot accept that I am loved. . . totally and as I am with no changes. I don't need to buy anything to make that love happen. I simply need to accept it. And, as I accept, I can be less dissatisfied with me and more able to see the true and wonderful person that God has made of me. This acceptance of love happens fully only in Christ. We do not need to buy something or respond to advertising to be in Christ and so satisfied. We are already there.

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If we are going to search for our salvation, our love, our security, and our satisfaction in Christ, we need to be free of these other distractions. Rather than giving in to distractions, perhaps we could use them. The next time we find ourselves wanting something urged onto us by clever copy, we might find that a signal to try to remember what it is that we really want: full acceptance in love. . . the acceptance in love given us in the Lord. We really do not want a thing; we want Him.

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## RESULTS

By Nicholas Radelmiller, OHC

All of us want results for our efforts, and we want those results now. If, for example, I want to learn French, I want to know it now. I don't want to struggle for years. If I want to play the piano, I want to play it now, and not have to work at developing the skill. Any one of us can think of our own secret ambitions and the results that we want now. This is a common trait.

The 'dark side' of this impatience often means giving up easily. If I can't run a mile now, why bother? If I can't play Chopin, now, why practice? Easily our desire for results can lead to abandoning the struggle. Or, sometimes, instead, we set goals for ourselves which are too low. Being afraid we can never attain the results we want, or being afraid that we are not capable of those valuable goals, we settle for mediocre results. I can "sort of" play the piano. I'll learn enough French to make train connections. Mediocre efforts make mediocre results.

Our lives in relation to Christ are not much different. Many of us, often new converts, begin with great enthusiasm. After a while we perhaps discover that the joys of religion aren't present, or that the Lord seems to have withdrawn himself, or that harsh "reality" makes our religious practice seem meaningless. At any rate, our beginning efforts didn't obtain the desired results (never mind that we can't define those results). Many of us give up. Many of us settle for a kind of luke-warm practice of religion, a haphazard and mediocre sort of religion. It's very sad.

In the lives of the saints many different qualities appear, but we can easily find one underlying quality in all of them. They persevered. They kept at it. They made mistakes, and then learned from those mistakes. They sinned, and accepted forgiveness. They continued to try. They were faithful. Benedict was steadfast; Teresa endured dryness; Bernard continued to love; Francis followed his vision; Charles de Foucauld remained in the desert until death.

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They all grew in the virtue of perseverance and all obtained results. That is, they all attained to holiness; they all attained life with God. Perseverance truly is the virtue which makes possible all others.

Our best example is the Lord who remained faithful despite doubt, betrayal, and lack of "success." He was faithful to death. He persevered to the cross, and the result of his faithfulness is our salvation.

If we really want to be holy we very much need this virtue of perseverance. It is not easy. We will need to endure pain, boredom, bad choices, limitations, and all the other problems of human life. But, in the end, there will be real results. We will know that we have been faithful. We will have grown in the Lord in a way that only the faithful know. And we will have the joy of his resulting welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servants. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

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#### CATHOLIC

By Nicholas Radelmiller, OHC

We use the term "catholic" in several ways, but the richness of the meaning is often far beyond our understanding. This is because we, as Christians, live not only with facts and appearances, but with mystery, and the catholic Church and catholic faith are mysteries, among other things. It all transcends our intellectualizing. While we really can't understand the catholic faith or the catholic Church, we can appreciate.

As the world's distances shrink and peoples are forced closer together, we must learn to appreciate the term "catholic" yet more deeply. One of the meanings of the term is that the catholic Church and catholic faith are at home in many places, many countries, languages, races, tribes. In line with this, we must add that it is not more at home in one culture than in another. Wherever Christ is preached and wherever sacraments are celebrated, he is present. He is at home, and so his Church also is at home.

Our difficulty is that we tend, naturally, to appreciate the term "catholic" too narrowly. We usually see only our own parish, or at the most, our own diocese. If all is not well in our own parish, we can easily be discouraged and disillusioned. The promises of Christ seem tarnished.

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If all is well, we can be complacent and encouraged, but still limited in understanding. We easily miss the richness and splendor of Christ as he shows himself in great diversity.

The "catholic" faith and Church imply that while we may differ enormously, we are one people in him. The eucharist may be celebrated in Africa in Hausa with dancing and drums, and it is the same eucharist celebrated in Mexico with mariachis and guitars. A Chinese peasant who is baptised receives the same baptism as does a convert in an English speaking American parish. Drums and pipe organs serve the same purpose when the Lord is present. The Church and faith "catholic" not only represent Christ, they receive and "baptize" the culture where he is found.

If we are really going to appreciate this term "catholic," let us expand our own awareness of the Church and the Lord beyond the bounds of our own parish, and indeed beyond the bounds of our own culture. Christ's Church is universal. Faith in him is universal. He is universal. He, and thus we, are at home wherever he is proclaimed and wherever men and women live his life, celebrate his sacraments, and proclaim his salvation. Let us enjoy the richness of his diversity, and enrich our life with his "catholicity."

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